

Apollo Bay Harbour Precinct Plan

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Meerreeng, Parreeyt pa Moornong *(Land, Water and Sky)*

Antarctica Architects acknowledge the Eastern Maar as the traditional custodians of the area. We pay our respects to their Ancestors and Elders, past and present. We recognise and respect their unique cultural heritage, beliefs and intrinsic connection to their traditional lands, which continue to be important to them today.

We value the contribution their caring for Country makes to the land, coastlines, waterways and seascapes within the municipality. We support the need for genuine and lasting partnerships with the Eastern Maar People to understand their culture and connections to Country.

Introduction

The Apollo Bay Harbour Precinct is located on Point Bunbury at Apollo Bay on the Great Ocean Road in Eastern Maar country. It is a popular and highly valued place which provides a range of opportunities for people to enjoy and utilise the foreshore and marine environment.

Key parts of the Precinct are set to receive a welcome refresh through the Apollo Bay Harbour Redevelopment Project (the Redevelopment Project) funded through the Geelong City Deal (GCD) program.

Management of the precinct was transferred from the Colac Otway Shire Council to the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (GORCAPA) in 2021. The 2020 Development Plan prepared by Council was then reviewed against the Marine and Coastal Act 2018 and new Marine and Coastal Policy 2022. That review process has informed this Precinct Plan.

GORCAPA have developed this Precinct Plan to recognise the importance of the precinct, provide for longer term strategic needs and deliver key upgrades through the GCD-funded project. It outlines a number of strategic directions, actions and future opportunities to improve the functionality and amenity of the precinct for local and visitor communities.

About this Plan

This Precinct Plan has been developed as part of the Redevelopment Project. It responds to community and stakeholder feedback on an Opportunities and Constraints Report and draft Precinct Plan in mid-2025.

These documents, an Engagement Report and an outline of how feedback has been addressed are all available on the Redevelopment Project page on the GORCAPA website, and this Plan should be read in concert with them.

Please see: <https://haveyoursay.greatoceanroadauthority.vic.gov.au/AB-harbour>

About the Apollo Bay Harbour Precinct

The Precinct has a long history, having been stewarded by the Gadubanud people of the Eastern Maar nation since ancient times and used by whalers since the 1830s.

The relative natural shelter from dominant wind and swell provided by Point Bunbury, coupled with its northerly aspect, has led to a concentration of highly valued activities in the Precinct. The most significant of these has been the commercial shipping and fishing which underpinned the development of the harbour breakwalls. The development of these structures not only created sheltered water within the harbour, but also enabled considerable modification of the internal shoreline and a significant realignment and extension of the Apollo Bay foreshore with significant accretion of sand at Mothers Beach and erosion further north.

The sheltered condition and natural and built assets within the precinct underpin a range of community values and uses.

The precinct enjoys direct access to the waters of Bass Strait, the nearshore marine environment and the nearby Marengo Reefs Marine Sanctuary. Beaches dominate the foreshore to the north and south of Point Bunbury. The precinct consists of coastal dune deposits along the foreshore and the Wiridjul Gravel formation across the headland. Foreshore vegetation contains a mixture of local and introduced species, with 2.248ha of the Coastal Dune Scrub and Coastal Dune Grassland communities. These communities are recognised as having the potential to support the presence of Leafy Greenhood and provide habitat for a range of threatened shorebirds and the critically endangered Southern Bentwing Bat. The vegetation on the site also contains flora species protected under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 including Coast Wattle, White Correa, Coastal Beard Heath, Coast Daisy Bush and Groundsel. A number of planted Bog Gum (*Eucalyptus kitsoniana*) are also present in the vicinity.

Noxious weeds recorded on the site include Bridal Creeper and Ragwort.

The landscape setting of the precinct is nationally significant with its intersection of hills, beaches and headlands. The accretion of sand to the west of the lee breakwater has resulted in the shoreline extending a considerable distance

seaward of the pre-harbour shore, and in the creation of large sand dunes, particularly at the eastern end of Mothers Beach. Community feedback indicates strong support for retaining the harbour’s relaxed small-town character.

The Port of Apollo Bay extends for 19ha and covers most of the precinct. Commercial activity is focused on the central area and the Lee breakwater. The Apollo Bay Fishermen’s Co-Operative occupies an elevated position and is a popular tourist attraction. The Operations Depot and commercial slipway are located downslope of the Co-Op. Fishermen’s Landing and associated pier and marina infrastructure on the Lee breakwall enable a variety of uses including vessel berthing and refueling. The working harbour function in the precinct is highly valued.

The south-eastern section of the precinct supports recreational uses through the provision of a popular public boat ramp, parking areas, a fish cleaning station and a public toilet. Recreational fishing clubs use the area as a base for fishing competitions, and commercial fishing charter operators also use the boat ramp. The Apollo Bay Sailing Club occupies a small clubhouse and lawn area close to the boat ramp and operates regular events and activities through the warmer months. The small beach in the south-east corner of the harbour is a popular place for recreation.

Mother’s Beach is a sheltered and popular beach for locals and visitors, with access generally via the car park and along the Lee Breakwall. The car park has a rudimentary changing shelter close to the breakwater, a small grassy area in its western corner and a temporary public toilet block at its southern end. Many people enjoy accessing the Lee Breakwater for fishing and sight-seeing.

The precinct also has important heritage values. Preserving the rich maritime history of the precinct is a key theme

from community feedback, and the entire precinct is locally significant through the heritage overlay in the planning scheme (H0300). It is also recognised that the natural resources of the precinct would have provided an optimal landscape for Aboriginal occupation. Several registered Aboriginal sites exist, including a freshwater well utilised by both Aboriginal people and European settlers. The exact location of the well is not clear due to modifications to the environment since the creation of the harbour.

Vehicle access to the precinct is via Nelson St from the Great Ocean Road and Trafalgar St from the Point Bunbury residential area. These roads intersect awkwardly adjacent to the Co-Op, from which Nelson St continues east as Breakwater Rd to Point Bunbury and Trafalgar St continues north and down to the lee breakwater. Pedestrian access is generally poor, often requiring people to walk on the road or on informal paths adjacent to vehicles.

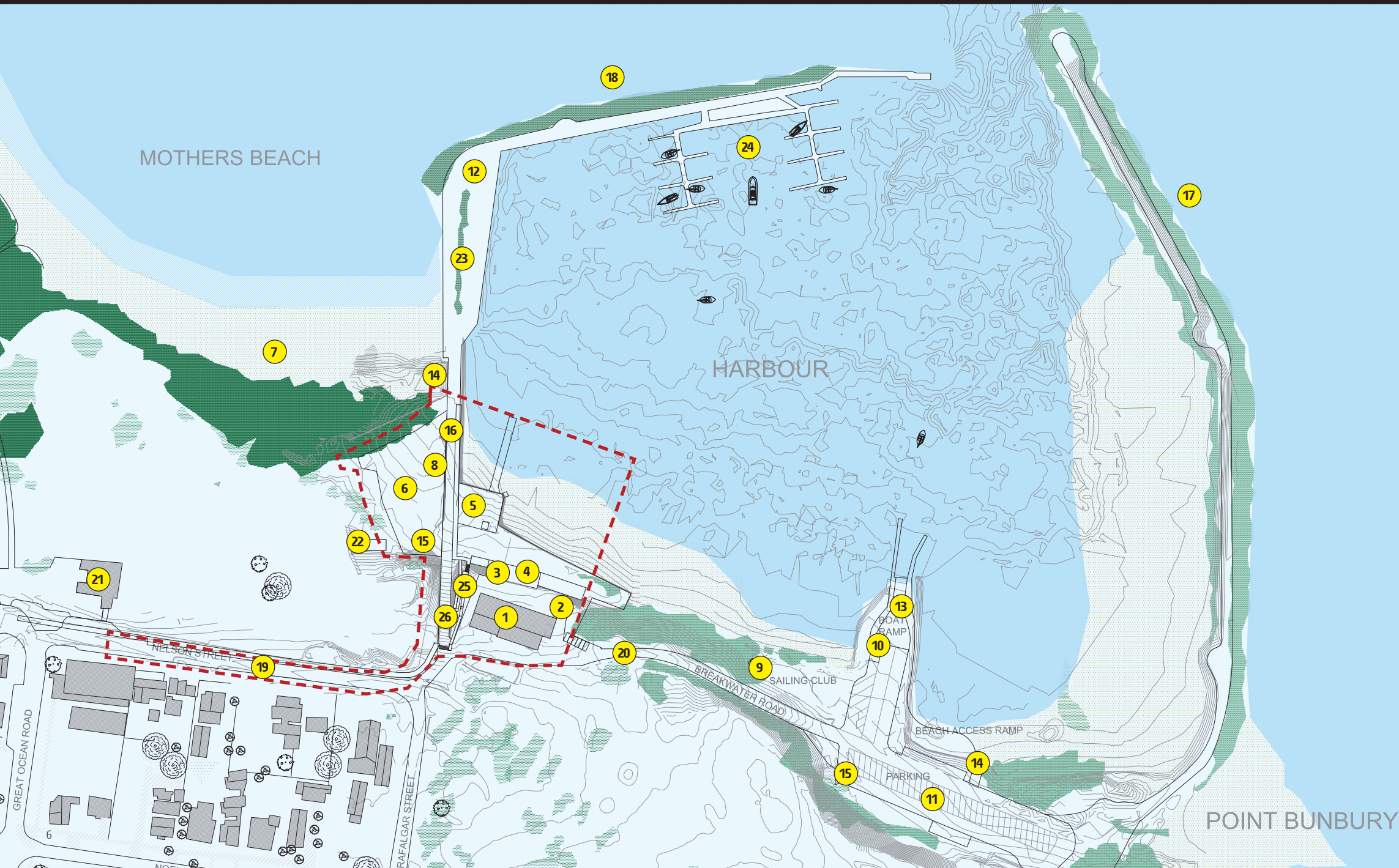
The southern and western sides of the precinct about the Apollo Bay Golf Club course, and the residential areas adjacent to Trafalgar St. The Golf Club’s maintenance shed is located immediately adjacent to the Mother’s Beach car park, with vehicle access through the car park. The Club has expressed a desire to relocate the shed to reduce contact with golf balls. The character of the area is distinctively open and coastal, with extensive views from many vantage points.

Like all popular coastal locations, the Harbour Precinct is subject to a range of challenges arising from the age and location of existing infrastructure, pressures to accommodate a range of different uses and environmental factors.

Existing Apollo Bay Harbour Precinct

The Apollo Bay Harbour precinct is currently formed of the following elements:

- 1 Apollo Bay Fishermen's Co-Op
- 2 Co-Op carparking and loading area
- 3 Viewing deck
- 4 Port Operations Depot
- 5 Slipway yard
- 6 Mother's Beach carpark
- 7 Mother's Beach
- 8 Changing hut
- 9 Apollo Bay Sailing Club
- 10 Fish cleaning table
- 11 Point Bunbury carpark
- 12 Fishermen's wharf
- 13 Boat ramp
- 14 Beach access ramp
- 15 Temporary toilets
- 16 Vehicle boom gate
- 17 Main Breakwater
- 18 Lee Breakwater
- 19 Nelson Street
- 20 Breakwater Road
- 21 Apollo Bay Golf Club
- 22 Golf Club shed
- 23 Diesel supply
- 24 Marina
- 25 Harbour stair access
- 26 Trafalgar Street ramp to Lee Breakwater



Challenges & Feedback

Working harbour

The Apollo Bay Harbour is one of the few remaining working harbours in Victoria containing commercial activities which depend on their proximity to sheltered water.

- There is strong community support for continuing port operations and a recognition of the contribution of the port to the character of the precinct.
- Commercial vehicles frequently travel the Lee Breakwater and Trafalgar St section of road to access the Fisherman’s Landing pier for access to boats and refueling.
- The slipway is in regular use, and requires a range of safety issues to be considered such as cable snapback, dust and high-water-pressure cleaning.
- The Port Operations Depot requires significant upgrades to meet current requirements and provide necessary workspaces, access and storage to support appropriate services for the precinct.

Tourism and recreation

Demand for a range of activities by visitors to the precinct continues to increase.

- The working harbour is considered a key tourism attraction. People can watch not only port and harbour operations from a safe distance, but also observe visiting yachts and other recreational boats.
- The Apollo Bay Fisherman’s Co-Op is a central tourism attraction for the town and the precinct, offering a takeaway seafood experience with sweeping views of Bass Strait. The offering is limited by the nature of the Co-Op building, the amount of open space around the Co-Op and the movement of vehicles around the building. The Co-Op also operates a commercial fish processing enterprise for southern rock lobster and abalone, requiring commercial deliveries adjacent to the take-away area.
- The deck adjacent to the Co-Op is a popular place to view whales during migrations.
- Community feedback on the Co-Op was mixed,

underscoring the need to balance commercial needs, local heritage and improving access to the Co-Op, landing and new deck for a range of users.

- The shelter provided by the Harbour attracts many people to its recreational opportunities at Mother’s Beach, the breakwalls, boat ramp and Point Bunbury beach access. This results in significant demand, particularly in peak holiday times and nice weather.
- Increasing demand and visitation places pressure on numerous services such as cleaning and rubbish.
- The sheltered water of the harbour attracts swimmers and creates potential for conflict with vessels and other port users.

Access

The level of demand leads to a range of challenges for vehicle and pedestrian access to and within the precinct.

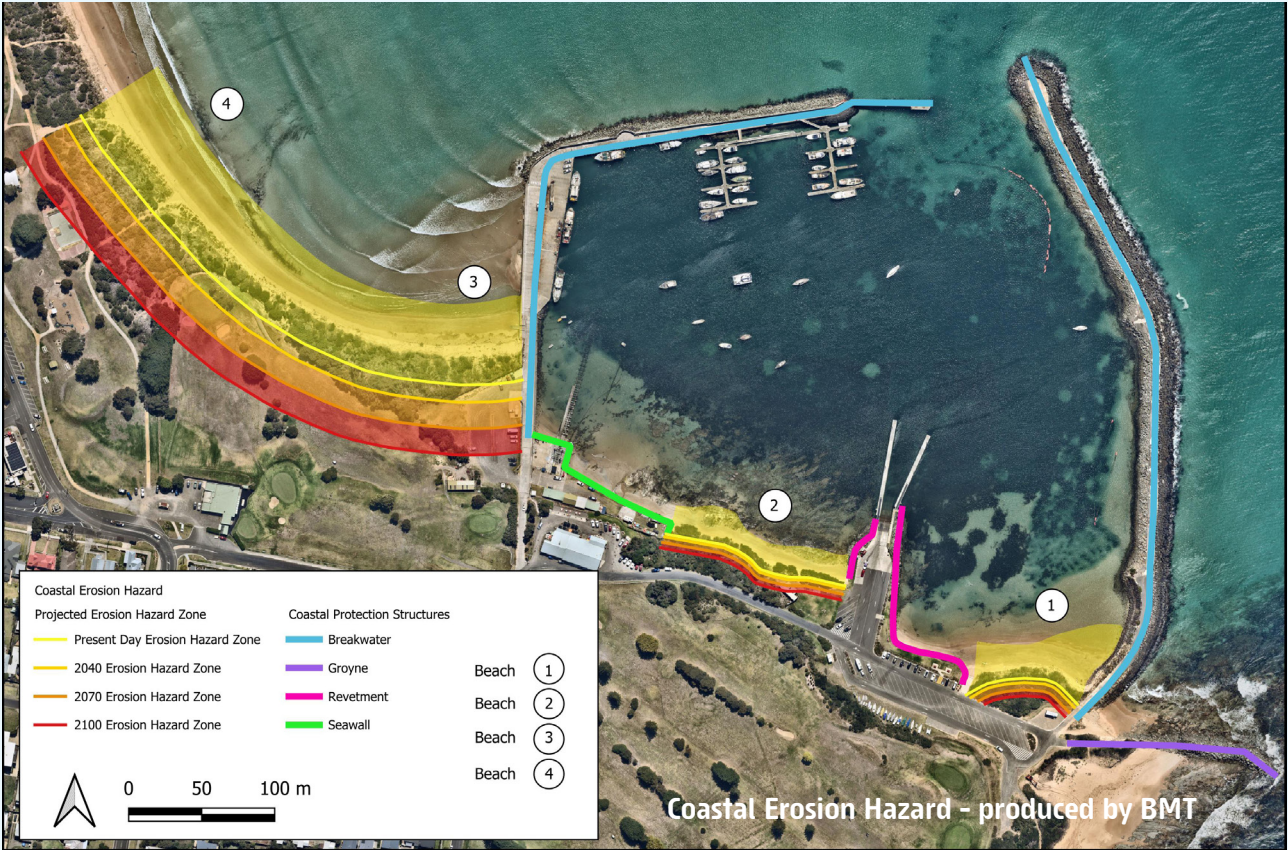
- A lack of dedicated paths requires pedestrians to often walk on or close to roads to move between key elements of the precinct. This creates conflict with both visitor and commercial vehicles.
- The absence of a direct pedestrian access from the harbour to the town centre leads to additional traffic visiting the precinct and people walking along the unmade access on Nelson St.
- Vehicle access and circulation can be difficult, particularly in peak times and when drivers of large vehicles and caravans are unsure where to go. The Nelson Street-Trafalgar Street-Breakwater Road intersection is widely considered to be problematic. It compromises the functionality of the road network in the precinct and creates congestion. This is exacerbated by inadequate wayfinding signage and clear traffic management arrangements, and affects pedestrian safety.
- Car parking is limited throughout the precinct with no dedicated bus or caravan parking areas. Parking for boat trailers at Point Bunbury can fill up at peak times, creating further access issues as fishers seek alternate arrangements. People searching for parking space also add to traffic congestion.

Coastal hazards

Investigations show that coastal hazards will continue to affect the precinct.

- In the absence of intervention, large storm events (1:100 year event) are likely to affect Mother’s Beach area and sandy pockets within the Harbour. This work was updated after the draft Precinct Plan was released and is more extensive than presented in the Opportunities and Constraints Report.
- The figure below shows the updated potential erosion hazard affecting the Harbour, the Apollo Bay foreshore and golf course to 2100. The extent of potential hazard is less within the harbour than on the open coast.

- The extent of storm tide inundation is limited by the elevation of dune, foreshore and backshore areas.
- The Mother’s Beach dune poses a safety risk through collapse of the scarp formed by coastal erosion, and its size is placing stress on retaining structures and creating problems due to windblown sand.
- The integrity of the internal harbour seawall is compromised in places, with the overall condition of seawall and depot landing assets not clearly understood and likely to require further investigation.
- Access to beaches is affected by erosion features and creates challenges for access within the harbour and outside the lee breakwall.



Challenges & Feedback



Flora and fauna

- Potential locations of threatened species such as the Leafy Greenhood places constraints on development in areas of native vegetation.
- Invasive flora species and foot traffic can place pressure on areas of indigenous vegetation.
- Inappropriate disposal of fish waste and visitation by seals to the fish cleaning table has resulted in unsafe interactions between people and seals.
- The infestation of the harbour by Japanese Kelp (*Undaria* spp) is likely to require ongoing monitoring to minimise impacts to the marine environment and recreational boating.

Heritage

- The heritage values of the precinct need to be protected in the future.
- The heritage overlay requires that special consideration be given to the heritage values of the Fisherman’s Co-Operative building, breakwaters, piers and beacons.
- The cultural heritage values of the precinct are not well known and impacts to registered Aboriginal sites need to be avoided. Any development proposal within the precinct needs to consider the potential location of the freshwater well.

Landscape and buildings

Current structures in the precinct have generally been built and located in an ad hoc manner over time and require refreshing.

- Future development of the precinct requires careful consideration of functionality and the impact of structures proliferating on the foreshore. Opportunities for consolidation need to be pursued.
- Existing buildings present a range of challenges including asbestos, drainage, structural integrity and lack of sustainability.

- A number of structures are reaching the end of their design life and need to be refreshed in a manner which is consistent with the character of the area, such as the retaining wall supporting the Mother’s Beach dune and seawall supporting the Operations Depot.
- Public amenities at the boat ramp are seen as a community priority but are not providing the required level of service.
- Any new development has the potential to impact views across and from the precinct. There is strong community support to retain views and vistas.
- The landscape values of the area require any new development to complement existing character with appropriate scale, colours and finishes.
- Public open space is a key attribute of the precinct and seen by the community as essential to preserving the character and amenity of the harbour.

Community infrastructure

The precinct provides the opportunity to improve community infrastructure in the precinct.

- There is strong support for the provision of facilities for Apollo Bay Ocean Rescue in the precinct as a dedicated emergency response capability throughout the year.
- Community feedback indicated strong support for providing storage for the Apollo Bay Sailing Club rescue vessel. The key challenge is the degree of coastal dependence for this vessel to be located in the precinct and its use for Sailing Club activities.
- Consultation revealed mixed support for a community meeting space in the harbour precinct in the context of other demands for space. This proposal also exhibits a limited degree of coastal dependence.

Strategic Directions, Actions & Opportunities

This Plan provides a way forward to improve the function and amenity of the Harbour Precinct and to address key issues affecting it.

To achieve this, it provides strategic directions, actions and opportunities under the three themes of:

- A working harbour.
- Commercial activities.
- The public realm.

A total of 50 actions and opportunities in this Plan will be delivered or explored through a combination of different approaches which include:

- Geelong City Deals
- Government grants
- Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority
- Future funding opportunities

A number of actions and opportunities will be delivered through a mix of these approaches.

Those actions and opportunities which apply to the whole precinct or whose location is not specified are not shown on the map on the following page.

A working harbour

Strategic Direction 1

Continue to support Port operations and deliver an upgraded and multipurpose Operations Depot.

- 1.1 Provide upgraded Port Operations Depot office, workshop, storage and staff facilities.
- 1.2 Consolidate new public amenities and visiting sailor amenities within the Depot building.
- 1.3 Provide a Changing Places facility within the Depot building.
- 1.4 Explore opportunities to provide Ocean Rescue vessel and vehicle storage at Point Bunbury subject to funding.
- 1.5 Investigate options to manage slipway cable snapback risk
- 1.6 Manage public safety and access to elements of the working port consistent with OHS requirements.
- 1.7 Ensure all new or improved buildings and functions in the precinct provide net community benefit, are coastal-dependent and address and showcase sustainable design principles.

Commercial and tourism activities

Strategic Direction 2

Provide opportunities for appropriate commercial and tourism activities.

- 2.1 Provide an interactive visitor experience and improved fish processing capacity at the Apollo Bay Fishermen’s Co-Operative which supports the ‘Bass Strait to Plate’ concept.
- 2.2 Deliver new and increased dining offerings at the Apollo Bay Fishermen’s Co-Operative which complements adjacent public spaces and promotes awareness of local heritage and agribusiness industry.

- 2.3 Create multifunctional spaces for events and exhibitions at the Apollo Bay Fishermen’s Co-Operative.
- 2.4 Ensure all commercial structures and activities address and showcase sustainability principles and enhance vertical integration with the port and harbour precinct functions.
- 2.5 Work with stakeholder agencies and proponents to facilitate appropriate commercial opportunities in the precinct.

Public realm

Strategic Direction 3

Support opportunities for safe and sustainable recreation.

- 3.1 Create an extended terrace and viewing deck adjacent to the Fishermen’s Co-Operative for pedestrian access only.
- 3.2 Collaborate with Apollo Bay Ocean Rescue and other stakeholders to explore options to provide vessel and vehicle storage at Point Bunbury.
- 3.3 Explore opportunities to re-locate the fish cleaning table with public toilets and install a maceration unit to enable connection to sewer.
- 3.4 Explore opportunities to provide safe pedestrian access to areas both adjacent to and over water in conjunction with adaptation planning.
- 3.5 Improve the level of service of recreational boating facilities in a manner consistent with relevant strategies and plans.
- 3.6 Investigate options to manage potential conflict between vessels and swimmers within the harbour.

Strategic Direction 4

Provide safe and efficient access and connections to and throughout the precinct.

- 4.1 Upgrade pedestrian access along Nelson Street.
- 4.2 Install and improve pedestrian road crossing mechanisms at all primary access points
- 4.3 Install clear and effective wayfinding signage to support safe pedestrian and vehicle access.
- 4.4 Develop a traffic management plan to address:
 - Traffic safety and circulation.
 - Pedestrian connections and safety.
 - Car parking.
 - Commercial and recreational vehicle movements.
 - Emergency vehicle access.
- 4.5 Explore opportunities to manage large and heavy vehicles within the precinct.
- 4.6 Upgrade the Mothers Beach carpark
- 4.7 Provide DDA-compliant parking spaces adjacent to the Co-Operative and at the Mothers Beach car park.
- 4.8 Investigate options to provide pedestrian access on the western side of the Trafalgar Street ramp onto the Lee Breakwater.
- 4.9 Investigate opportunities to provide pedestrian access between the Co-Operative area and the Point Bunbury carpark.
- 4.10 Explore options for a direct pedestrian link between the harbour and town as relevant work on coastal adaptation progresses.
- 4.11 Work with Council to identify overflow parking opportunities and install relevant signage.
- 4.12 Work with Council to identify funding opportunities to implement intersection improvements.
- 4.13 Work with key stakeholders to improve service delivery to support anticipated growth in visitation and public amenity.

Strategic Directions, Actions & Opportunities

Strategic Direction 5

Understand and minimize the impacts of coastal hazards on community safety, infrastructure and the environment.

- 5.1 Ensure all new coastal-dependent structures, infrastructure and roads in hazard zones incorporate resilient design and materials
- 5.2 Avoid installation of non-critical infrastructure in hazard zones.
- 5.3 Design Mothers Beach carpark with consideration of accommodating longer term inland dune migration and safe beach access.
- 5.4 Manage Mothers Beach dune safety, beach access and resilience through active management of dune scarping and supporting dune migration inland and ecological functions.
- 5.5 Explore nature-based adaptation options through design and harbour operations, including future maintenance of beach areas.
- 5.6 Monitor and address coastal hazard impacts inside the harbour and at key coastal access points.
- 5.7 Manage the potential removal of existing structures in an environmentally responsible manner and consider material reuse.

Strategic Direction 6

Minimise impacts on flora and fauna.

- 6.1 Continue to implement the Coastal Vegetation Strategy.
- 6.2 Explore opportunities to relocate the fish cleaning table to minimise inappropriate fish waste disposal and risks of marine mammal interaction.
- 6.3 Work with DEECA and other stakeholders to monitor invasive marine species within the harbour.

Strategic Direction 7

Protect and respect cultural and heritage values of the precinct.

- 7.1 Include interpretive information on Aboriginal cultural heritage within the precinct.
- 7.2 Include interpretive information on local maritime heritage within the precinct.
- 7.3 Investigate the location of the freshwater well.

Strategic Direction 8

Provide appropriate open spaces and built form consistent with landscape and character values.

- 8.1 Provide new public amenities and co-locate them with the Depot Operations building.
- 8.2 Include opportunities for local artists to contribute to the public realm.
- 8.3 Establish and install appropriate public furniture, landscaping, natural terrain and grassed areas.
- 8.4 Retain Point Bunbury toilet in its current location and investigate options for improvement, sewer connection and co-location with fish-cleaning table.

Strategic Direction 9

Support appropriate community use of the precinct.

- 9.1 Investigate and support opportunities to co-locate Sailing Club vessel storage with a re-located Golf Club shed or at alternative sites such as the Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve.
- 9.2 Collaborate with stakeholders to explore opportunities such as:
 - Activation of the viewing deck for events such as community markets.
 - Golf Club shed relocation and co-location with other functions.
 - Golf ball impacts to car parking.
 - A direct pedestrian link from the harbour to the town centre.
 - Pedestrian access and movement along the western side of the Trafalgar St ramp.
 - Pedestrian access and movement from the Co-Operative to the Point Bunbury carpark.

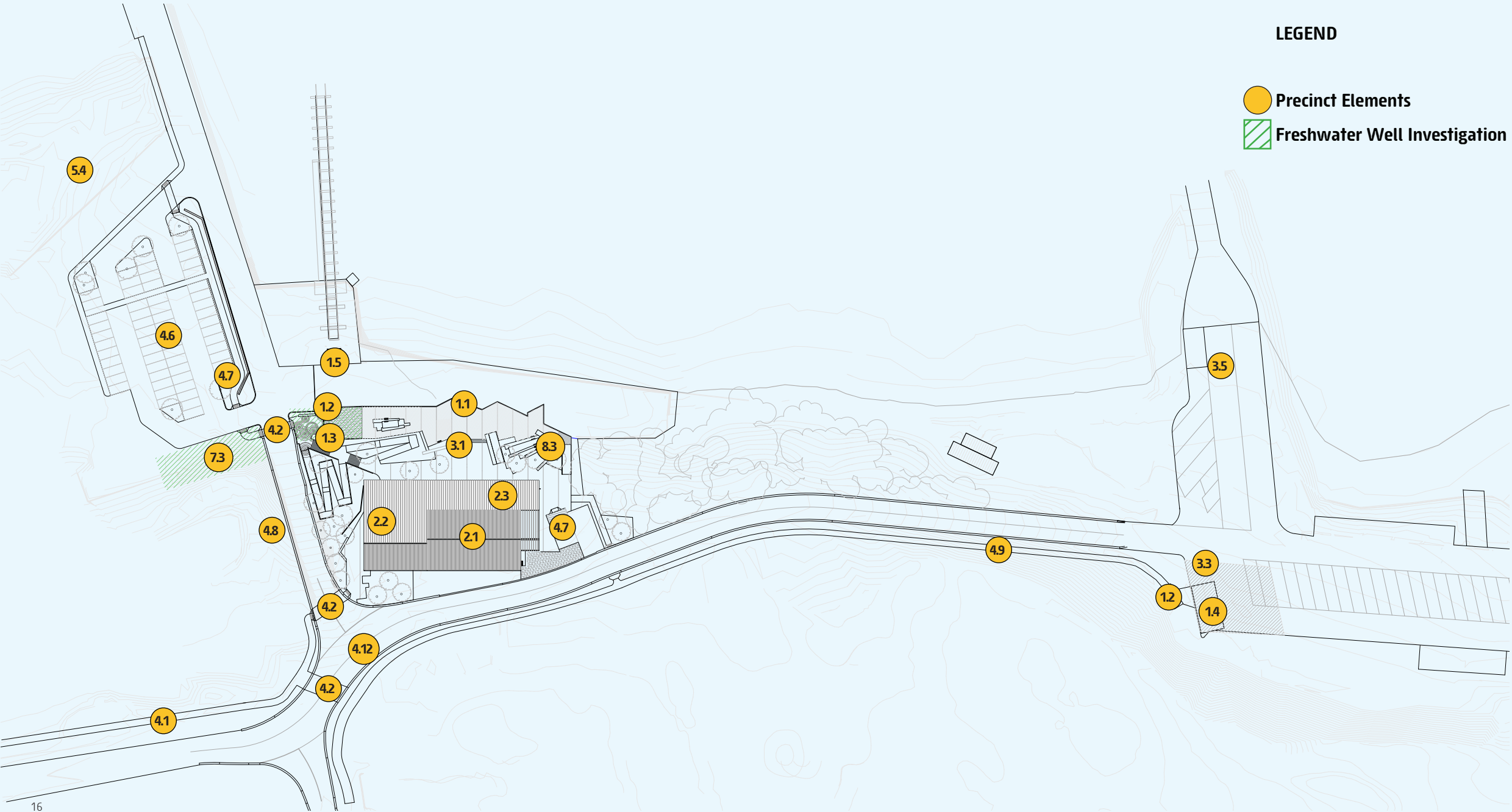


Precinct Plan

LEGEND

-  **Precinct Elements**
-  **Freshwater Well Investigation**

-  1.1 Upgraded Port Operations Depot
-  1.2 Public and sailor amenities
-  1.3 Changing Places facility
-  1.4 Potential Ocean Rescue storage
-  1.5 Manage cable snap-back risks
-  2.1 Improved Apollo Bay Fishermen’s Co-Op
-  2.2 Improved dining offering
-  2.3 Multifunctional space
-  3.1 Extended terrace and viewing deck
-  3.3 Relocate fish cleaning table
-  3.5 Improve recreational boating facilities
-  4.1 Upgrade Nelson St pedestrian access
-  4.2 Improve pedestrian crossing
-  4.6 Upgrade Mothers Beach carpark
-  4.7 DDA compliant parking spaces
-  4.8 Investigate pedestrian access
-  4.9 Investigate pedestrian access
-  4.12 Intersection improvements
-  5.4 Manage Mothers Beach dune safety
-  7.3 Investigate freshwater well location
-  8.3 Improved open spaces





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